

of the tradition, wanted the village dancers
 to go and
 dance in front of his house first. It may be,
 continued
 the old man, that the older families are now
 poor and
 that these men have become rich through
 lending grain
 at exorbitant rates of interest. But that did
 not make
 these latter better people than the former.
 How could
 the village dancers give up the older Gowda
 and dance
 first before the house of these newly rich
 people? If
 the dancers tell them that they would
 finish the old
 Gowda families first, these rich men get
 angry and
 threaten to form new groups of village
 dancers and
 create factions in the village. Can anything
 be more
 improper, asked the old man, and is it so
 easy to take
 hold of the dance-stick and dance? In the
 past, the
 selection of the dancer was made with
 care. They
 never would admit a bad boy to join the
 group. The
 man selected had to be clean in mind and
 body all the
 day that he was dancing. If he prostrated
 himself
 before God and came out and began, how
 like an
 inspired man he used to dance! It was a
 law in those
 days that while dancing the stick should not
 drop from
 the hand. If it did, it meant evil to the
 dancer. In
 those days they used to say that in older
 days still,
 the dancer who dropped the stick would, if
 a virtuous
 man, worship the stick and pray to God to
 forgive him
 and restore him to grace, and lo! the stick
 would rise
 from the ground and go to his hand of its
 own accord!
 All such manifestations of divine power had

now gone
for ever. Such and other stories the old
man repeated
at great length.

Most of the songs sung by these dancers
are of the
past, but the teachers even now add
words to them